



Future Challenges, Local Solutions

The Role of Community Owned Solutions in Sustainable Environmental Management and Governance in the Global South

**Final Conference of Project COBRA
21-22 January 2015 - Brussels, Belgium**

Project COBRA

[Project COBRA](#) aims to identify and showcase indigenous solutions for the management of natural resources in the Guiana Shield region that can in turn inspire development policies and programmes in response to growing social, economic and ecological challenges. To achieve this, COBRA works towards increasing self-confidence across indigenous communities and strengthening their position as stakeholders.

The project brings together South American and European Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that have extensive experience in enabling and disseminating grassroots solutions to complex problems in the Guiana Shield region of Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela.

Recently, in the wake of the international negotiations on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, ecosystem services have emerged as a new form of economic value, which is being integrated into international development funding schemes such as REDD+. In the Guiana Shield, a large part of these territories have been historically occupied and sustainably managed by indigenous communities. Over time, they have developed a deep understanding of their environment and the ecosystems they inhabit. Unfortunately, their knowledge and needs rarely dictate development priorities.

Conference Objectives

The ambition of the final COBRA conference in Brussels was to inform and inspire individuals from key agencies and CSOs who are involved in setting the EU policy agenda, with findings and results from Project COBRA.

Target audiences of the conference were Members of the European Parliament, EC policy officials, representatives from GS country missions, NGOs that focus on EU international development and environment policy, and NGO practitioners and consultants.

Links between policy and practice - and their interactions with communities - were core elements of the day. The sessions in the morning concentrated on policy and theory. In the first part of the afternoon the focus was on practice with the launch of the COBRA handbook: **'How to Find and Share Community Owned Solutions'**.

EU development cooperation in the South includes support to the implementation of global environmental agreements and policies. This dimension was the major focus of the policy-oriented elements of the day, with Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) as an example which is of particular relevance for rural and indigenous communities.

Key questions concerning policy – community links in two directions

1. From policy to community: What are the implications of these policies for community viability? How do communities respond?
2. From community to policy: How relevant are our findings for these policies? How can policy development from its very start engage communities and take community owned solutions into account?

Conference Programme

Wednesday, 21 January: Guiana Shield Action Night - 19:30-22:00

Venue: [Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19, 1050 Brussels](#)

On the eve of the COBRA conference, an interactive event was organised including the showing of the Project COBRA film and other videos; a photo / poster exhibition; chat corners on indigenous livelihoods and culture, community owned solutions; future scenarios and policy ideas; and the Project COBRA Handbook and other publications.

Thursday, 22 January 2015 – Project COBRA Final Conference – 09:00-18:30

Venue: Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), [EESC Building – Bâtiment Van Maerlant – Room VM 3 \(2nd floor\), 2 rue Van Maerlant, 1040 Brussel](#)

09:00-09:20 Welcome and Introduction

Purpose of session: *To provide information on future priorities for action on sustainable development by the European Commission's DG Research and Innovation. The session will also briefly highlight what challenges global policies address, how national governments manage their implementation, and what implications they should have and have for local communities.*

Moderator: **Wouter Veening**, Chairman / President, Institute for Environmental Security (IES), The Netherlands

Research and Innovation Priority Action on Sustainable Development
by **Birgit de Boissezon**, Head of Unit, Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, Directorate I, DG Research and Innovation (RTD), European Commission

Why the Community Level is Important for the Viability of Global Policies
by **Wouter Veening**, Chairman / President, Institute for Environmental Security (IES), The Netherlands

09:20-11:00 Session 1: Policies for Sustainability

Purpose of session: *To provide an overview of opportunities, challenges and shortcomings of current global environmental policies for local communities in the South.*

Moderator: **Luc Bas**, Director, IUCN European Union Representative Office (IUCN EURO), Belgium

Topics and Speakers

Introduction to COBRA Movie and Video Declaration by **Lakeram Haynes**, Project COBRA Coordinator, North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDDB), Guyana.
Showing of films

Global Environmental Policy Making and Community Ownership: A CSO Perspective on the UN post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
by **Staffan Nilsson**, Member, Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

National and Local Impact of PES and Other Policies in Guyana
by **Janette Bulkan**, Faculty Member, Department of Forest Resources Management,
University of British Columbia, Canada

Panel Discussion

Patrick Chesney, Programme Specialist & Head, Guiana Shield Facility, UNDP, Guyana

Bas Verschuuren, Co-Chair, IUCN Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of
Protected Areas / Coordinator, IUCN Sacred Natural Sites Initiative, Switzerland

Marie-Ange Kalenga, Forest Governance Campaigner, FERN, Belgium

Open Discussion

Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 Session 2: Changing Policies

Purpose of session: *To discuss locally rooted models that deliver sustainability*

Moderator: **Rob Glastra**, Senior Advisor, Monitoring and Evaluation, IUCN National
Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN-NL)

Topics and Speakers

Connecting Scales: Why do Sustainable Development Policies Require Local Solutions?
by **Jackie Shaw**, Director, Real Time, United Kingdom

Why Community Owned Solutions as an Alternative Model for Sustainability?
by **Odacy Davis**, Project COBRA Manager, Iwokrama International Centre for Conservation
and Development, Guyana

Policy Changes and Funding for Community Owned Solutions
by **Matthew Simpson**, Associate Director, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Consulting, United
Kingdom

Panel Discussion

Leontien Cremers, Project Officer, ENGOV EC-FP7, Centre for Latin American Research and
Documentation (CEDLA), The Netherlands

Soledad Muniz, Head Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation Programme,
InsightShare, United Kingdom

Sarah Doornbos, Knowledge Officer Agrobiodiversity, HIVOS, The Netherlands

Jorge Restrepo, *Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo*, UNDP, Colombia

Open Discussion

Lunch Break

14:00-15:30 Session 3: Changing Practices

Purpose of the session: *To provide an overview of approaches to engage communities in
conservation and development policy*

Moderator: **Karin Zaunberger**, Policy Officer, DG Environment, European Commission

Topics and Speakers

Working with Communities using Participatory Methods
by **Vanda Radzik**, Advisor, Community Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (CMRV)
project in Guyana / Independent: Associated with Iwokrama & UN Women Caribbean
Advisory Group

*Using a Systemic Approach to Supporting Communities in Identifying and Promoting their
own Solutions*
by **Andrea Berardi**, Faculty Member, Communication and Systems, The Open University,
United Kingdom

Visual Methods as a Process of Empowerment and Change

by **Elisa Bignante**, Senior Lecturer in Political and Economic Geography, Department of Culture, Politics and Society, University of Torino, Italy

Sharing Stories and Peer to Peer Learning

by **Céline Tschirhart**, Post-Doctoral Research Assistant, Project COBRA, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom

Local Reflections on the Process of Community Empowerment and Showing of Best Practice Videos

by **Lakeram Haynes**, Project COBRA Coordinator, North Rupununi District Development Board and **Michael Williams**, Chairman, North Rupununi District Development Board, Guyana

Coffee Break

16:00-18:30 Session 4: Implications for Policy Makers

Purpose of the session: *To discuss implications of Project COBRA findings for environmental management and development policies*

Moderator: **Judith Rosales**, Representative Venezuela, Central Committee, International Biodiversity Society of the Guiana Shield (IBG)

Topics and Speakers

Project COBRA: Headline Messages

by **Jay Mistry**, Coordinator, Project COBRA / Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom

Turning Findings into a Practical Tool: The Community Owned Solutions Handbook and MediaGate

by **Géraud de Ville**, Programme Officer, Institute of Environmental Security, Belgium / United Kingdom

Closing Remarks

by **Ugo Guarnacci**, Research Programme Officer, Directorate I, DG Research and Innovation (RTD), European Commission

Reception

Conference Organising Committee

Rob Glastra Senior Advisor IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands	Ronald A. Kingham Director / Brussels Liaison Institute for Environmental Security	Jay Mistry Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London
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